plunder ; while many, perceiving that the trade was lucrative, assumed the dress of these officials, and were guilty of robbery and the most shameful excesses, During the plague in London in 1665, there were numbers running with avidity to astrologers and fortune-tellers, who plied their work with more than their usual effrontery and success ; others who made a boast of their profanity, and sported their blasphemy; there were reports of nurses and watchmen hastening the dissolution of the diseased, in order to get possession of their property ; and there was more than the common number of thieves and robbers, and these busy at their unhallowed work in the chambers and about the very persons of the dead and dying. In a desolating plague at Bagdad in 1831, there were the usual robbery and pillage ; and it is stated, that when, towards its close, the river inundated and swept away 15,000 people, the sensibilities of the survivors were so deadened, that the event passed without any remark being made, and without an attempt to relieve the sufferers.

It looks as if with but a little more prosperity distributed among mankind on the one hand, or with a little more adversity on the other, it would have been all but impossible, by the ordinary means fit to be addressed to moral and responsible beings, to keep this world in subordination. The appalling wickedness which prevailed at Eome in the reigns of the emperors who succeeded Julius Csesar, the abandoned shamelessness of the males and females of the upper classes, seem to show, that if mankind generally were placed in a situation in which every lust could be indulged without restraint, they would soon give themselves up to crime the most offensive and intolerable. " The corrupt and opulent nobles," says Gibbon, " gratified every vice that could be collected from the mighty conflux of nations and

manners. Secure of impunity, careless of censure, they lived without restraint in the patient and humble society of their slaves and parasites. The emperor, in his turn, viewing every rank of his subjects with the same contemptuous indifference, asserted without control his sovereign pleasure of lust and luxury/'* On the other hand, the history of individuals, of cities, and nations in the time of famines and plagues, shows that, with more intense suffering, the race would have been as

* Decline and Fall, B. vi.